

that their children and their children's children who will become future citizens of the state will have equal opportunity for a normal life under the average standards of living.

Early in 1937, the State Department of Public Health, with aid from the Federal Government, began an intensive campaign of immunization against typhoid fever among these migratories. During January, in Madera County, approximately 739 individuals were given three injections of typhoid vaccine at weekly intervals. During February, in Imperial County, approximately 1,000 individuals were similarly immunized. In March, a prospective trainee for the School of Public Health commenced immunization against typhoid fever, and has to date given 17,000 injections. Additional health officers connected with the School of Public Health will be placed in the field during the summer and fall, in order to increase the number of immunizations, as it is necessary that this work be done for our own protection.

There has been, during the past year, an effort on the part of the Federal Resettlement Administration to provide more adequate housing facilities for these migratory people. They have had in operation since January two migratory labor camps, one at Arvin, near Bakersfield, and the other at Marysville. At present they are building four or more camps, which they expect to have completed by the 1st of August. At the request of the Resettlement Administration, the State Department of Public Health made arrangements with the aid of federal funds to place public health nurses in the migratory camps. We have at present one nurse at Arvin who works not only in the established camp of the Resettlement Administration, but also in the squatters' camps of that area. She has done a great deal to instruct and help these people in child hygiene, nutrition, and home nursing care, and aiding in the control of communicable diseases among them. Too much cannot be said of the splendid coöperation that has been given by the county health departments in this work. In the last part of February, another nurse was placed in the Resettlement Administration camp at Marysville. She also has done a most excellent piece of work among these migratory peoples, and has received full coöperation from the health departments.

For the coming year, it is planned to place in the field six public health nurses and two full-time health officers to work among these migratory people. They will act in coöperation with the established county health units in promoting sanitation, adequate housing, nutrition and control of communicable diseases in the Resettlement Administration camps, the grower camps and the casual squatters' camps where these migratory people are found. Immunization for typhoid fever will be continued and immunization for diphtheria will be begun. It is hoped that further help from a nutritionist can be obtained to teach these people to cook balanced meals which will come within their income range.

These people are not residents of the state, or of the county in which they are found, and are,

therefore, not entitled to hospital or medical aid from the counties, so it is necessary in cases of acute illness to prevail upon the counties to admit them for hospitalization, or to call upon the health officer or the private physicians of the community to donate their services. This activity may be considered as an emergency service, for the residence of many of these people is only temporary, and if they remain in California, they will eventually become residents of the state, when there will be no further need for this type of work.

313 State Building.

## THE LURE OF MEDICAL HISTORY†

### SARRÍA'S TREATISE ON THE CESAREAN OPERATION, 1830\*

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I\*\*

**I**NTRODUCTION.—The two documents which are here presented as translations afford an insight into a medical problem which at one era in the history of the state attained considerable significance. This problem involved the extraction of fetuses from pregnant mothers when the latter died for various reasons, in order that baptism might be given. What rendered the situation unusually perplexing was that practically no competent medical men, or even midwives, existed who were capable of performing what is here called the cesarean operation. The only individuals with the requisite intelligence and interest in the matter were the missionaries. They encountered the situation mentioned very frequently among their neophytes, the converted Indians, of which there were many thousands. Furthermore, it was also to their interest that the spiritual needs of the white population be properly cared for.

#### HOW FATHER PREFECT VICENTE FRANCISCO DE SARRÍA MET THE PROBLEM

Thus we find that, during the later days of the missions, the Father Prefect, Vicente Francisco de Sarria,<sup>1</sup> considered the question one worthy of his devoted attention. Although himself by no means versed in medicine, he read what literature he had available, utilized a wide personal experience, and wrote out a treatise on the cesarean operation for the benefit and guidance of his followers. This

†A Twenty-Five Years Ago column, made up of excerpts from the official journal of the California Medical Association of twenty-five years ago, is printed in each issue of CALIFORNIA AND WESTERN MEDICINE. The column is one of the regular features of the Miscellany department, and its page number will be found on the front cover.

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\*\* In three parts.

<sup>1</sup> Vicente Francisco de Sarria was born in 1767 at San Estévan de Echabarris, near Bilbao, Spain. He entered the Franciscan Order as a young man and came to Mexico in 1804 as a missionary. After serving five years in the College of San Fernando, he came to California in 1809, where he remained until his death in 1835. He served as missionary at San Carlos, 1809-1829, and at Soledad, 1829-1835, where he died at his post. He held the position of Prefect of the Missions, 1813-1819, and again, 1823-1830. From 1823 to 1825 he was also Father President. He is buried at San Antonio Mission. He was generally regarded as one of the best and ablest of the Franciscan missionaries.

treatise, which occupies itself as much with theology as with strictly medical matters, represents the serious attempt of an intelligent man to contribute to the existing knowledge of his place and time. As such it may be regarded as the first original contribution ever offered by a resident of California in the field of medicine.

#### FATHER SARRÍA'S LETTER AND TREATISE

It should be noted particularly that the procedure which Father Sarria terms the cesarean operation is not precisely what we today understand by that term. It did not involve the removal of a fetus at full term from a living female—for this could not be done, under church law, by a Catholic clergyman—but rather the extraction of a fetus after the mother had died from other causes. The general method, however, was much the same as with a living subject.

Finally, it may not be amiss to point out that this treatise, together with the introductory letter, not only discusses numerous problems of a theological, legal, and social nature, but also paints a striking picture of the status of medical theory and practice in California a century ago.

#### FATHER SARRÍA'S LETTER

"Hail Jesus, Mary and Joseph!"

To our apostolic fathers and missionaries from the mission of San Carlos to San Francisco Solano:

My very dear Fathers: May Jesus Christ bring you health and peace.

I have never seen any circular or public paper appertaining to our ministry, since by the Grace of the Lord I have been connected with it, which treats of or so much as makes the slightest mention of the cesarean operation.

Nevertheless, an acquaintance with it in many circumstances is important, for the salvation of numerous souls depends upon it as a regular procedure. And since personal and domestic examples are most moving and effective for purposes of persuasion, a single such case may be quoted to illustrate the point. In the work of the Cistercian Monk Antonio Josef Rodriguez,<sup>3</sup> entitled *Nuevo Aspecto de Teología Medico Moral*,<sup>4</sup> where, together with much other material, that illustrious author treats thoroughly and scientifically of the cesarean operation, it may be perceived that one of those who have most advanced this operation in recent times

<sup>2</sup> This is the covering letter written by Father Sarria to his missionaries. It is dated at La Soledad, July 26, 1830. Both documents, in the original handwriting, are bound together in a small volume in the Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

<sup>3</sup> Antonio José Rodríguez, a Benedictine monk, was born in Mérida, Spain, in 1705 and died in 1781. He was a well-known writer on medical and theological subjects. Aside from the work mentioned here, he wrote various books and pamphlets, including *Disertación Sobre el Gran Problema de la Respiración* (Dissertation Concerning the Great Problem of Respiration).

<sup>4</sup> Literally: New Aspects of Medico-Moral Theology. This work is not listed in the Library of Congress Catalog, nor is it to be found elsewhere in this country, so far as I am aware, although it is mentioned in the *Manual del Libro Hispano-Americano* by Antonio Palau y Duleat (Barcelona, 1923-7). Any information concerning the present location of a copy would be appreciated by the writer.

with respect to its potentialities for opening the gates of eternal salvation to aborted children, has not only been of our sacred calling, but also has been actively engaged as Apostolic Missionary. This [Cistercian Monk Rodriguez' book] was a result of his observations with reference to the operation during the course of his career as a missionary.

And because it is worthy of some notice on our part I will quote what the above-mentioned author states in this regard [*i. e.*, with regard to the mission problem]:

Volume 4 of the book cited, Paradox 1, marginal number 24:

And in consideration of the same I will add that in the year 1760, when I was soliciting in Madrid the revision and publication of my books, the learned and pious Father Deoclato de Cuneo,<sup>5</sup> an observant priest, published in Venice a volume concerning the salvation of stillborn and aborted children. Filled with the spirit of charity and love of his fellow men, he asserts that he was moved to write this work concerning the baptism of fetuses and the opening of dead mothers in order to aid the child with baptism, because of the repeated experiences with the loss of innumerable souls, due to neglect of abortion cases, which he knew of and saw in the course of his missionary work.

Thus speaks the illustrious Cistercian. He adds, also, that such having been the impression made upon his soul (to wit, that of the learned missionary of whom he there refers) by this negligence and the care which he believed would constitute the remedy, and in order to anticipate all contingencies, he deliberately studied—as may be seen in his book—everything there is and can guarantee the certainty of his method. In various other parts of his book (*Nuevo Aspecto*, etc.), he quotes with particular respect that good Father and missionary.

And since, speaking of missions, it is not believed even among the faithful that these cases are very rare, permit me to relate here what happened to me in the few trips I made to them [the missions] while I was staying in our Apostolic College<sup>6</sup> before coming to these missions.

There died a pregnant woman in the locality of the mission where I was staying (it was called Coatepeq), to whom I was called, by agreement, to hear her confession, as it seems to me, a short time before her death. She having died and the priest being absent from the district in which we were, the other father (of those of us who were managing the mission) and I, by reason of the obligation under which we perceived ourselves to be in the matter, prepared to do the operation. Not knowing any competent person of whom we might avail ourselves, we took the book which described the operation in order that, while one was reading the appropriate passage and the other executing according to the letter, we might set about the work.

However, there appeared and spoke to us the midwife, a mature woman, who seemed experienced in her profession. She assured us that the

<sup>5</sup> I can find no trace of this individual. The orthography in the Sarria letter is obscure. The name is spelled both Deoclato and Desclato. He evidently was an Italian, since Cuneo is a province in Piedmont, northern Italy. I also can find no information concerning Hyldmo and Tegjos, subsequently mentioned in these documents.

<sup>6</sup> The Apostolic College of San Fernando, the headquarters of the Franciscan Order in Mexico.

fetus was dead, for a reason or reasons which she gave us, but which I do not remember now. However, we considered them adequate to warrant our believing her and desisting from the operation—and we actually did desist.

If the case were presented to me now, after I have read Father Rodriguez in his above-mentioned book, *Nuevo Aspecto de Teología Medico Moral*, etc., surely I would not hesitate and, while it was within my power, I would take measures to complete the operation.

The said Father Rodriguez quotes the clearest testimony of physicians outstanding in their profession, and even of Protestant authors in support of the thesis that one should not fail to open any woman who dies pregnant, and refers to the instance in which Hyldmo, an excellent surgeon, admits, himself, to have been mistaken. The latter believing the fetus to be dead, nevertheless proceeded with the mother sufficiently to demonstrate that it had died. But actually the fetus was removed alive and did not die until the third day afterward. Thereupon he [Rodriguez] adduces in confirmation another noteworthy example:

But still are his words (on page 26, Volume 4 of the above-mentioned work) even more to the point in elucidating the matter in the case encountered by this same Cangiamila<sup>7</sup> in October, 1736. A poor woman in his own parish died in a pregnant condition. The midwife, who was of long-standing in her calling, and the surgeon, who was well known and had practiced in the Hospital of the Holy Ghost at Rome, attested and asserted beyond any doubt that the fetus had already died two days prior to its mother. Cangiamila, in nowise disturbed, had the deceased opened and removed a live girl, whom he himself baptized under the name of Placida and who lived a quarter of an hour. The learned and pious Ecclesiastic was desirous of completing fully his triumph. He buried the baby girl with much ceremony, officiating at the interment himself, an action which caused great spiritual joy to the entire city.

Thus speaks the celebrated Cistercian, author of the *Nuevo Aspecto*, etc., a book which, as a matter of fact, is not so very recent, for we saw above, according to his statement, that in the year 60 of the previous century he was making a revision in order to give the work to the press.

The subjoined practical manual (*práctica*) of the cesarean operation is derived almost entirely from what I have seen of this author's description (it contains nothing of my own, save that I have had a copy made of the original draft, which I am enclosing)—that is to say, according to the teaching of the best surgeons and especially Francis Mauriceau,<sup>8</sup> a French surgeon who practiced the art of obstetrics for forty years in Paris. Monsignor Cangiamila and the above cited Desclato [says Rodriguez] describe it also, but he thinks the method of Mauriceau is to be preferred because of its extensive use.

I hesitate to mention to your reverences the matter of making a copy of this, for I know very

well the difficulties and embarrassments, in addition to other perplexities, which at present beset us in our ministry.<sup>9</sup> But I would wish, my fathers, considering the object in view, since the situation not only might conceivably arise, but in fact cannot fail to arise in the regular course of events, particularly if the proper measures are taken to ascertain in the case of the demise of all women of the appropriate age and condition, whether or not they are with child, according to the obligation of charity to suffer no soul to perish, and since the remedy is now a standard procedure, clear and easy, such as the one I am giving you—I would wish, I say, that your reverences would make a slight demonstration of the ardor of your zeal and charity for the better discharge of your obligations in this respect by copying, or causing to be copied, the document I am transmitting to you, unless there be already in the mission another one [copy] or perhaps some approved book which treats in detail of the matter and which belongs to the mission. This is in order that practical directions may never be lacking there by which you may be guided whenever it may be necessary or desirable to perform the cesarean section.

Furthermore, it is not sufficient to the purpose that he who is father minister [of a certain mission] at present be acquainted with the operation or be able to perform it without the necessity of further instruction, inasmuch as after him may come some other who, according to the chances of our ministerial destiny, does not know about it.

In order that this copy may be made, as your reverences perceive I particularly recommend, you may retain the circular for eight or ten days and thus take whatever time is convenient to do it. Also, to further the same purpose and in order that the business may not be too long delayed, I myself have had copies made such that one may go from here [Soledad] as far as Santa Barbara, and on the way may circulate the intermediate missions in the regular manner.<sup>10</sup> Another, which is sent directly to San Buenaventura should circulate the missions successively from there to San Diego, and still another at the same time as the former ones through the missions from here to San Francisco Solano.

After having been signed in sequence this letter, with the copy which accompanies it, should be returned from the last mission.

May we remain united in the prayers and holy sacrifices of your reverences, and your beautiful and fervent ministry in the Lord.

Fr. Vicente Francisco de Sarria.

Soledad

July 26, 1830."

(To Be Continued)

<sup>7</sup> Francisco Manuel Cangiamila, born in 1702 in Palermo, Italy, died in 1763; was Inquisitor-General for the kingdom of Sicily. He was regarded also as a pioneer authority on embryology, having written a work, *Embriología sacra*, etc.

<sup>8</sup> Francis Mauriceau was born in Paris (date unknown), and died in 1709. He is described as being an able general practitioner, but is chiefly famous as an obstetrician and gynecologist. He wrote several authoritative works in this field.

<sup>9</sup> He refers here to the troubles accompanying the secularization of the missions, which was finally completed some three or four years afterward.

<sup>10</sup> The copy of the treatise in the Bancroft Library has inscribed on its title page, "San Antonio Mission," which would indicate that it was the copy which circulated to Santa Barbara. However, the signatures appended to the letter are those from the northern missions as follows: Ramon Abella (San Juan Bautista), Felipe Arroyo de la Cuesta (San Juan Bautista), Juan Moreno (Santa Cruz), José Viader (Santa Clara), Narciso Duran (San José), Tomás Estanega (San Francisco), Juan Amoras (San Rafael), and Buenaventura Fortuni (San Francisco Solano).